



Robert Zoellick: United States Trade Representative

President George W. Bush recently appointed Robert Zoellick to the top trade negotiator for the United States government. As United States Trade Representative (USTR) Zoellick will have a significant sway over the type of trade policies the United States pursues, the regions of the world which the US priorities in trade and the way which the US government interacts with non-governmental organizations and civil society in making trade policy.

Zoellick's Background

In keeping with a pattern of appointing Cabinet members from his father's staff George W. Bush has appointed Robert Zoellick to the United States Trade Representative position. Zoellick served as undersecretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration and was later Deputy Secretary of the Department of State when Baker headed State under George Bush Senior.

Mr. Zoellick was the Olin Professor at the U.S. Naval Academy for 1997-98. He was the Executive Vice President for Housing and Law at Fannie Mae, which is the largest investor in housing in the United States. His government experience includes service as an Under Secretary of State and Deputy Chief of Staff at the White House. He has also served as Counselor to the Secretary of the Treasury. He was the principal U.S. representative during the process of German unification and the President's personal representative for two G-7 Summits. He is director of Alliance Capital, Jones Intercable, Said Holdings, the German Marshall Fund, American Council on Germany, the Eurasia Foundation, the National Bureau of Asian Research, and the Overseas Development Council, among others. (from: <http://www.foreignrelations.org>)

Zoellick's Free Trade Ideology

Zoellick is a dogmatic free trader who as undersecretary of State in the first Bush administration was involved in negotiating NAFTA and creating the World Trade Organization. As the Washington Post describes, Zoellick "has enthusiastically taken on the role of Republican attack dog on trade. In speeches and articles, he has attacked President Clinton and Vice President Gore for craven pandering to protectionists in the labor and environmental movement - policies, he claimed, that led directly to the failure of trade talks in Seattle last year" (Washington Post, Jan. 13, 2001).

In an article he wrote for the Washington Post after the collapse of the Seattle ministerial Zoellick summarily dismissed the "protesters" arguments as "contradictory" and "seriously flawed" and blamed the failure of the talks on Clinton's "intellectual waffling and lack of commitment." Of the diverse and multiple organizations and peoples critiques of the WTO Zoellick wrote their "logic of action was clear. If they could overburden the process of negotiating more freedom for trade, the negotiations would break down. Then special interests would be successful in maintaining existing barriers and protections. Inefficient producers can now continue to avoid nasty competition and keep costs higher for consumers and other businesses." Zoellick did not bother to look around his dogmatic free trade ideology in even an attempt to understand the critiques leveled against the WTO by numerous civil society organizations from both the United States and developing countries. (Washington Post, "Clinton's Seattle Straddle," December 14, 1999).

Priorities as USTR: Fast-track negotiating authority and FTAA (ALCA)

Zoellick has made clear that his top priority in the new administration is securing fast-track negotiating authority in order to advance the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations. Zoellick has stated repeatedly that he plans to have fast-track authorization on its way by the April meetings to negotiate the FTAA, stating before the Council on Foreign Relations in October that "To advance this free trade agenda,

the next President must take the lead in persuading the Congress to grant the Executive negotiating authority. After all, if the U.S. is unwilling to face vested interests that oppose open markets, how can we expect the developing Latin democracies to do so?" In a talk on "Governor Bush and the Security of the Americas" Zoellick derided the current "slow" pace of the FTAA negotiations writing that Latin Americans can no longer point "to a vision of hemispheric free trade because the FTAA has slowed to a crawl. It is a real problem that the Administration hasn't secured the authority from Congress to negotiate this hemispheric free trade agreement."

Possible Challenges for Zoellick

Reaction from Democrats in Congress to Zoellick's agenda will be important to watch in the first months of the administration. Without party allegiance Democrats are likely to come out early against fast-track negotiating authority for the Republican President. Many Democrats have also signaled their opposition to any new trade agreements which do not include minimum labor and environmental standards, standards which, the Washington Post writes, Zoellick has dismissed as "protectionism and isolationism destructive to free trade." Furthermore, Zoellick's insistence that trade policy be thought of in terms of national security interests in addition to commercial interests have even some business lobbyists worried. Zoellick and President Bush have each repeatedly identified the Americas as top priority in foreign policy and trade, despite the fact that Bush does not have a Latin American expert on his staff, signaling that the FTAA negotiations will be the new USTR's most important agenda item. (Washington Post 1/13/01)

A Few Questions for the International Gender and Trade Network:

- How will Zoellick's views on trade policy as a national security interest impact U.S. trade with poorer countries? How might the IGTN respond?
- How will the new staff at the USTR address the WTO? How might the IGTN respond?
- How will the new staff at the USTR address the FTAA? How might the IGTN respond?
- Will NGOs have even less access to information than we have already have? How might the IGTN respond?